CALLING PEOPLE UNTO ALLAH

Its Need, Importance And Fundamental Principles

DR. ISRAR AHMAD

English Translation by

Dr. Absar Ahmad

Shoba Samo Basr

Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an

PREFACE

This booklet is an adaptation of a lecture which Dr. Israr Ahmad, Founder President of Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Quran and Ameer, Tanzeem-i-Islami, delivered in October 1967 at the annual moot of Jamia Muhammadia in Multan (Pakistan). Dispelling many popular misconceptions regarding *Da'wah*, Dr. Israr Ahmad discusses in detail the utmost importance of the religious duty on each Muslim of calling people to Islam as the cardinal "*Sunnah*" of the Holy Prophet (SAW). It is due to this duty that this *Ummah* has been given by Allah (SWT) the title of the best *Ummah*. If the Muslims forget this bounden duty of theirs, they are but a nation among the nations of the world. They have neither any good in them nor any reason for superiority over others.

It is hoped that the booklet will motivate Muslims in discharging their religious obligations in respect of propagating and disseminating the message of Islam.

ABSAR AHMAD
Director, English Department
Quran Academy, Lahore.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

AND WHO IS BETTER IN SPEECH THAN ONE WHO CALLS (MEN) TO ALLAH, WHILE HE DOES RIGHTEOUS DEEDS AND SAYS, I AM SURELY OF THOSE WHO SURRENDER (UNTO HIM)? (41:33)

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After reciting the above verse, the gathering was addressed thus:

In fact I do not deem myself competent enough to address such a magnificent religious gathering. But as you have invited me to speak to you on this occasion, I comply most humbly by submitting a few random thoughts on topic which might be really beneficial to those who, according to a Qur'anic verse, "hear and bear witness[1]." It is expected only of such listeners that my words may find a place in their heart.

I have based my talk on the above stated verse from the Holy Qur'an i.e.

"And who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah, while he does righteous deeds, and says, I am surely of those who surrender (unto Him)".

The topic of my talk is Islamic *Da'wah* – or calling and inviting people to Allah (SWT). I have chosen this particular topic for two reasons: 1. The Collective Aim of the *Ummah* and 2. The foremost *Sunnah* of the Prophet (SAW).

The Collective Aim Of The Ummah

We Muslims are the member of an *Ummah* (Islamic community) whose sole purpose of existence and the aim of installation, according to Qur'an, is none other than calling people to Allah. As such, in this terrestrial existence not only our dignity and honor depends on realizing this collective aim, but our very existence as a religious community also depends on executing this duty in the right earnest. In the seventeenth section (*ruku*) of *Surah Al-Baqarah* (the Cow), along with the order for the change of *Qiblah*, the following verse was revealed:

> "And thus have We made you an exalted (middle) nation (Ummah), that you may be the bearers of witness against the people and (that) the Messenger of Allah may be the bearer of witness against you." 2: 143

The divine order for the change of *Qiblah* was in fact a symbol that henceforth the custodian of the mosque of Jerusalem i.e. the sons of *Israel* have been deprived of the guardianship of the holy place and of their position as the upholders of the divine guidance. And in their place were installed the sons of *Ismael* as the custodians of the Holy *Kaba* at Makkah Al-Mukarramah and as the new recipients and propagators of the Divine Guidance. Quite obviously, the sons of *Ismael* occupy the pivotal and nuclear position in the Muslim *Ummah.* As such their language was chosen for the revelation of the last Divine Book, and their

customs and practices with amendments, modifications, additions and omissions have become the warp and woof of the last divinely revealed code of life. Other nations - *akhereen*[2] -which joined them later in Islam became in essence an integral part of them. This indeed was a great blessing of God on them. But it was a privilege of only "*Ummiyyeen*" (unlettered people of Arabia) that the last Prophet (SAW) was chosen from amongst them.[3]

The objective and aim of the formation of this *Ummah* has been described very clearly thus in *Surah Al-i-Imran:*

> "You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of)men: you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah." (3:110)

This verse makes it crystal clear that, according to the Qur'an, there is a radical difference in the ultimate aims and goals of the Muslim *Ummah* and other nations and communities of the world. By and large the goals which most nations of the world have been aiming at are self-aggrandizement, political power and military armaments, amassing of wealth, and subjugation of other peoples for their own selfish ends. This subjugation has been both political and/or cultural and economic. On the other hand, the aim and object of the very existence of this *Ummah* is that Allah (SWT) is recognized as the Lord of the Universe, His commands are exalted and upheld by all, the truth triumphs, virtues and good deeds flourish and vices and wickedness are completely uprooted. In other words, this *Ummah* is in reality the representative of God on earth: an agency for the propagation of virtue and an institution for the total eradication of evil and falsehood from this world.

History is a witness to the fact that so long as the Islamic community as a whole discharged its divinely ordained duty, it was itself exalted and honoured alongwith the Truth it stood for. But when it turned a blind eye to its very *raison d'etre* and became only a nation like other nations pursuing worldly riches and comforts, it became the target of Divine wrath in the same way as the children of Israel had become earlier. In the beginning the punishment was confined to-

> "And if you turn your backs He will bring in your stead a people other than you" (48: 38)

That is, the leadership of the Islamic world was taken away from the "children of *Ismael*" (*i.e.* the Arabs) and was entrusted to the *Kurds* and *Saljukes*. And when they did not take a lesson even from this, the more severe warning of Divine wrath overtook them in the form of *Tatar* onslaught and thus providing an exemplification of a state depicted in the Qur'an in these words:

> "We sent against you Our servants, of mighty prowess, so they went to and fro among the houses ruining them completely." (17:5)

Historians surmise in vain as to why the *Tatars* marched straight down to Baghdad and did not turn toward India even though the Indians very much anticipated their attack. The answer to this enigma is not far to look. The nucleus of the Islamic *Ummah* at that time was

constituted by the Children of Ismael *(Bani lsmael)* and Baghdad was then the political centre of their government. And it was God's will to punish them severely for their misdeeds. It is an historical fact that the groups of people who gained ascendancy afterwards in the *Ummah* were not from the 'Children of Ismael'. Rather they hailed from other people - *'akhereen'* in the Quranic terminology, *viz;* Moghuls in India and Turks in Asia Minor who also ultimately held the *Ummah-wide* religio-political leadership of *'Khilafat-i-lslami'.* In this way the vestigial religious superiority of the 'Children of Ismael' vanished completely and made them the subject and tax-payer of the Turks. It was only in the early part of this century that they came out from the subjugation of the Turks and were later dominated by the European Imperialists. In the middle of the century they however gradually got freedom from them and heaved a sigh of relief. A quarter century after this occurs the most painful chapter of this story. Even after having political freedom after a long spell of subjugation, they did not learn a lesson from their history. They turned their backs to the *'Deen'* and adopted westernized luxurious and lavish way of living, and indulged in mental and behavioural vagrancy. Instead of promoting the global unity of the Muslim *Ummah,* they took to racial and territorial nationalism. They completely repudiated the fundamental teachings of Islam and oppressed the advocates of the true religion. Until at last to the extent of the 'Children of Ismael the "second warning"[4] of Allah (SWT) was also fulfilled at the hands of a Divinely proclaimed damned nation *(i.e.* the Jews) they suffered a terribly disgraceful defeat in 1967.

As a result of the recent[5] Arab-Israel war, no doubt the entire Muslim *Ummah* has been disgraced and the stigma has been shared by all Muslims. But surely the Arabs are the worst hit as the Qur'an says:

"Who took on himself the lead among them, will be given a grievous punishment". (24:11)

Religious and moral decadence is undoubtedly visible in the whole of Muslim *Ummah,* but the fact is that in this some Arab countries are far ahead of other Muslim nations. It is, therefore no wonder that they got the lion's share in the disgrace and humiliation. As the Arabs were historically top most in honour and respect, quite logically they should now have the largest share in humiliation and disgrace.

To cut the long story short the sole aim of this *Ummah* is to invite people to the call of Allah. And not only its honour and respect, its very survival rests on the fulfillment of this aim.

There is only one way, both for the *'ummiyyeen'* (unlettered people *i.e.* the Arabs) and *'akhereen'* (other non-Arab nations) taking inspirations from the happy tidings contained in the Qur'an:

"It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you" (17:8)

they should build up their morale and pay heed to the Divine warning:

"....and if you again return (to disobedience) We too will return (to punishment)."(17:8)

They should get up to discharge their duties honestly and sincerely. These repeated warnings are for us only to remind that there is no way for we Muslims but to turn to Allah (SWT). And that not only for regaining the past grandeur and glory but also for the guarantee of our survival, there is no programme of action for us except turning ourselves and inviting others to Allah (SWT).

The Foremost Sunnah Of The Holy Prophet (Saw)

The second reason why I have chosen this particular topic for today's talk is that this gathering consists of such people who love the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and are eager to put in practice his example of conduct and character. Blessed are you indeed who really have a strong desire to follow the Prophet's *Sunnah.* You try to learn and remember as many of Prophet's teachings and practices as possible and act upon them with great zeal. Not only this, on the basis of minor differences in details you even quarrel with each other. But what a pity that you have totally renounced and forgotten the greatest *Sunnah* of the Prophet, an action which he persistently performed from the very first moment of his Divine Call to the last moment of his earthly life, *viz,* the *Sunnah* of Islamic *Da'wah* - calling people to Allah. Who can deny that preaching and propagating the word of Allah were the most emphasized *Sunnah* of the Holly Prophet (SAW)? Who can say that the Prophet has been involved all his life more in anything else than spreading and disseminating the message of Allah and turning people toward Almighty Allah? Now if *Sunnah* is constituted by the behavioural pattern and actions of the Prophet, then for God's sake, ponder a little over the question: What is his most important *Sunnah?* Please think over the emphatic injunction of the Prophet:

"Convey from me/on my behalf"

and realize how much he has generalized and widened this order by adding:

"even if it is a single verse".

'*Rafa Yadain*' (raising two hands in prayers) and '*Ameen-bil-jahar*' (to say *Ameen* aloud in the prayers) and many other practices of the Prophet (SAW) are often debated violently among the rival sects of Muslims. But surely even those who observe these practices in prayers cannot say that the Holy Prophet (SAW) acted on these throughout his life without break. On the other hand, however, was the act of preaching and propagating the Islamic faith and its fundamental principles - calling people to Allah, and worship Him alone. This was an act which he performed continuously, persistently and zealously throughout his prophetic mission. For twenty three long years he was ceaselessly engaged with all his mind and soul in this most vitally important activity. It means that the work of *Da'wah,* on the one hand, according to the Quran is the very objective and aim of the existence of Muslim *Ummah.* On the other hand, it is the most persistent and emphasized practice of our beloved Prophet (SAW). I shall, therefore, take this opportunity to make a few observations on this theme.

Stages And Levels Of Islamic Da'wah

Inviting people to *Deen* or "Call them to Allah" is by no mean a simple or single-phased action. Rather it involves a plurality of variegated steps and progressive stages. Beginning from the very person of an individual Muslim and his family:

> Save yourself and your family from the hell - fire (66:6)

it extends to kith and kin, and tribe or the groups, and further:

> and warn your nearest kinsmen (26:214)

and still further it goes to one's total social group or polity:

> 0 people, worship Allah (11:50),

and finally at the widest possible level it relates to the whole of humanity:

> ….so that you may be witness for mankind (2:143)

Again in its initial stages, the obligation of propagating Islam and inviting people to Allah consists only in admonishing and warning people against the grave consequences of their wrong beliefs and evil deeds:

> 0 you who are clothed! Arise and warn (74: 1-2)

but its ultimate goal is to proclaim and establish the supreme greatness and sovereignty of the Lord in the whole of universe:

> And your Lord do magnify (74:3)

Considered from the point of content and approach, the *Da'wah* work admits of several types and levels according to the taste and competence of the audience it is addressed to. For example, if call people to Allah is sounded out to highly educated people and intellectuals, it must necessarily be made in strictly academic and rationally cogent manner. Otherwise it will have no impact on them, as the Quran says:

> Call people to the way of your Lord with wisdom (16:125)

And if the occasion demands, it might be couched in simple and plain phraseology. In other words, it might consist in a sort of exhortation or sermon delivered in a heart - moving tone:

…and with goodly exhortation (16:125)

Again, a preacher during the course of his work may come across an obstinate and fussy person. There he has to resort to debate and logical argument as the Qur'an says:

…and argue with them in a way that is the best (16: 125)

That is to say, even in dialectical argument or debate the Qur'an enjoins one to be nice and polite, and not harsh and foul-mouthed. And, finally, if the need arises, a holy war also becomes the highest stage of the religious obligation of "calling people to Allah":

And fight with them until there is no persecution and total religion freely professed for Allah. (8:39)

so that Almighty Allah's word is exalted, only His orders reign supreme in the world and people act with justice and equity:

…so that people act with justice (57:25)

In today's discourse I shall not discuss these higher stages of *Da'wah* which necessitate collective effort on the part of *Ummah*, and which, as an essential aspect of the Universal prophethood of Muhammad (SAW), is undoubtedly an obligation to be fulfilled by the *Ummah* as a whole. Nor shall I concern myself with the total social and religious revival and re-awakening of all Muslims which cannot be accomplished without organized and sustained efforts of well - organized groups working for this noble cause. Rather, I shall today concentrate on those initial and basic stages and levels of Islamic *Da'wah* which are both obligatory as well as possible for each Muslim in his individual capacity.

Ridiculing And Belittling The Prophet's Sunnah

Before proceeding further, I want to draw your attention to the utter mockery which is prevalent in our society in the garb of 'the holy duty of religious preaching and propagation.' As you know, every religious sect or party has enlisted a group of people who can quite appropriately be called the "civil service" of that particular group or sect, who on payment deliver fiery and polemic speeches on minor controversial points in villages and towns. These sermons and speeches hardly bear any fruit except that of throwing the audience of that very particular sect into momentary ecstasy and convicting and cajoling them to the belief that their own standpoint on those controversial points is the right one. Quite understandably, such preachers do not have the courage to say clearly and directly to their listeners that they have such and such shortcomings and omissions. They cannot admonish them on un-Islamic practices, *viz;* business and trade based on interest, keeping of wrong accounts, illegal gratification, tax

evasion, ostentatious living, etc,. Even if some oblique reference is made to those practices, it is generally of no avail because these meetings themselves are financed by the donations of people indulging in all sorts of illegal and un-Islamic practices. Majority of the listeners may for a short while enjoy the truthfulness of their preachers without realizing the practical implications of those imperatives. On the other hand, the big businessmen and moneyed people remain content with a silent, sarcastic smile on their own life and behaviour without any resolve to really discontinue their evil deeds. In fact they manage to take revenge on these preachers for feeling of bad conscience by maliciously narrating the private lives and practices of these very preachers which are usually worse than their own. And this entire activity is known as the preaching and propagation of the *Deen.*

Gentlemen, I most warmly and sincerely invite you to ponder over this whole issue very very seriously. Is it not tantamount to ridicule and derision of the most emphatic and continuous *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (SAW)? And are we not in this way scoffing at, and making fun of, the personality of the Prophet? Does it not indirectly bring disgrace and bad name to our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with whom the pulpit of the mosque is associated? For God's sake try to think over this issue candidly. To be sure, to work for religion on payment is not prohibited. But the fact should be borne in mind clearly that a paid worker can at best be a teacher or mentor but not a preacher with a missionary spirit, and an 'inviter to Allah' in the real sense of the word. Indeed the very first condition that a true preacher must fulfil is that his work should have no motive other than a concern and a sincere wish for people's salvation and success. He should openly declare that he is disseminating and propagating the Divine religion selflessly and in the spirit described in the Qur'anic verse thus:

> And ask of you no reward for it. My reward is only with the Lord of the worlds. (26:109)

The Reward Of Reviving The Sunnah

I believe you must have heard several times the saying of the Holy Prophet (SAW) that "he who revives any of my *sunnah,* which has become obsolete and unknown on account of being out of practice for long, will get the reward of hundred martyrs." I invite you most humbly today to revive and activate the Prophet's *sunnah* of 'calling people to Allah'. And this is possible only when each one of us resolves with all his heart and soul that he will be an 'inviter' to *Deen,* a 'caller to Allah', and humble follower of the Prophet's tradition of the propagation and dissemination of Islam.

The Most Essential Condition Of Da'wah: Faith In The Providence Of Allah

One should not at all think that the obligation of inviting people to Islam requires very elaborate and thorough knowledge of the Islamic faith. I assure you that most of the Prophet's companions possessed far less knowledge of which now passes as *'Ilm-e-Deen'* and which most of you have acquired so laboriously. The complete and perfect knowledge in which they

excelled was the knowledge of true faith and belief, as one of the companions reported:

> We first learned the faith and then Qur'an.

It is also quite logical that the pre-requisite of Islamic *Da'wah* should be staunch and deep faith and belief in the Oneness of the Creator - Allah, that is the reason why the verse immediately before the verse quoted above mentions the highest pinnacle of faith *i.e.*, steadfastness and resoluteness in the belief of Allah's providence and sustenance:

> Verily those who say 'Our lord is Allah' and then remain steadfast ….. (41:30)

Only those can fulfil the requirements of Islamic *Da'wah* who have full faith in Allah and remain firm in their belief.

Second Condition: Religious Action

The second pre-requisite of *Da'wah* is that the life of the preacher should be an embodiment of all the virtues and good deeds that Islam enjoins upon its followers. His whole personality and life should be enlivened by a true and passionate faith in Allah. That is exactly why in the above cited verse immediately after

> …and who is better in speech than he who invites men to Allah (41:33)

> good and pious action

has been mentioned. And this is quite understandable because without the example of good and pious practical life of the preacher himself the vocation of calling others to Islam will remain ineffective and empty. Mere teaching, pedagogy and research work, no doubt can all be carried out and pursued even by persons who do not themselves act upon what they profess. And of course all these activities are important in their own sphere and certainly not without utility so for as they go. But *Da'wah* work is of a totally different nature. It can be effective and truly useful only when it is supported and accompanied by the pious and righteous conduct of the preacher. The fact is that the requirement of good and righteous deed is such a challenge that many a Muslims cannot accept it. And they consequently make an illegitimate division of groups among Muslims: between those who earn money by Islamic or un-Islamic means and not engage themselves in *Da'wah* work and those who devote themselves exclusively to Islamic *Da'wah* or preaching and are patronized by the first group. No doubt this division of roles among Muslims is a clever move and prudently welcomed by most. But the fact is that there can be no greater revolt and subversion against Islam than this apparently gentlemen's agreement between groups of Muslims.

The Real Objective Of Da'wah

The above mentioned Quranic verse highlights another all important aspect of the religious duty of *Da'wah, viz;* people should be called to Allah and to Islam and not to a particular person, group, party, or sect. The chief aim and objective of *Da'wah* work should be that the largest possible number of men should recognize and confess the Lordship of Allah, and believe in Him wholeheartedly and with full conviction, should make only His obedience and worship obligatory upon themselves, should seek His pleasure as the chief aim of life, and for achieving that, they should adopt the pattern of behaviour prescribed and exemplified by the Holy Prophet (SAW). This idea has been expressed in this magnificent verse in two ways: (i) "He who invites men to Allah" lays down unambiguously that the call or invitation should be for Allah, not for a particular individual, party or sectarian group. (ii) In the words

> …and he said, verily I am from amongst the Muslims (41:33)

It has been made emphatically clear that the caller (preacher) should proclaim himself only a Muslim and should not align himself to any particular group or sect. His call should only be to Islam alone in its pristine purity - and not to any biased or sectarian interpretation of it, because in the sight of Allah the true *'Deen'* is only Islam.

> Surely, the religion, with Allah is Islam (3:19)

Third Condition: Humility And Modesty

This is indeed a great miracle of the Qur'an that it explains most comprehensive meanings in briefest possible words. In the part of the verse:

> …verily, I am from amongst the Muslims (41:33)

attention has been drawn to another trap a preacher is liable to fall into *i.e.* false pride, self-conceit and egotism as a preacher. This wrong attitude, on the one hand, takes the preacher away from the mercy of the Almighty and, on the other hand, makes his *Da'wah* activity ineffective. In these words, the inner humility and modesty of a true preacher has been aptly depicted. That is, he always considers himself as one member of the Muslim *Ummah* or community, and in no way superior to other Muslims.

Two Pitfalls Avoided

In fact if we deeply ponder over the above lines, we would realize that the association of a preacher with ordinary Muslims by saying, 'Verily, I am from amongst the Muslims' forecloses two types of pitfalls in which heedless preachers may get entrapped. Firstly, they may unwittingly create a new sect within the Muslim community and thus damage the unity of

the Muslim *Ummah.* This danger can be averted by the fact that a true and sincere preacher of Islam and his companions always keep in view that they are from amongst the Muslims in general and not a separatist or exclusive group of Muslims to be distinguished from others. Secondly, the personality of the *Da'wah* worker may be idolized and revered to the extent that it is almost worshipped by his followers. Mostly, this predicament originates from the preacher himself when he develops the feeling that he is somehow different from the common run of people. This megalomaniac feeling of the preacher about himself necessarily influences his close associates and they start to eulogize him. And gradually his teachings become a sort of cult and he, as its leader and exponent, becomes like on idol who is worshipped and revered, thus adding to the traditional list of false gods worshipped by pagans. This evil can only be averted if the preacher always keeps in mind the truth that he is an ordinary member of the Muslim community and that in Islam there is no personality cult. The Muslims worship no man, however, highly placed, great and noble he may be. Islam teaches strict monotheism and this teaching is its most distinctive feature and its basic cardinal principle. As such, the greatest desire of a true preacher of Islam always is that he should breathe his last in the state of *Iman* and he considers this as the highest success in life.

The Most Exalted Mission And Call

Also ponder over the significant statement:

And who is better in speech than who calls people to Allah (41:33)

These Quranic words point out that in this world many motivated and capable men invite people to various envisaged ends and work untiringly to achieve their goals. For example, some sound out a call for the interests of their tribe and clan, some praise their homeland and work for its greatness, some claim to stand for and establish democratic political system in their society, while some others try to enforce communist ideals in their polity and economy. But of all these, the most high, sublime and exalted is the call of a person who invites men to their Creator - Allah - and His *Deen.* As a matter of fact there is no higher calling on this earth in which a person can engage himself than this one, viz to become a summoner unto Allah and to become like the Holy Prophet (who was a beacon house of light) at least a small candle of guidance. According to the Qur'an this ideal and mission in life is the highest thing people should aspire and crave for:

…and for this let aspirants aspire (83:26)

The Gist Of The Discourse

What has been said above can be summarized as follows:

1. As the very purpose and objective of the creation and existence of the Muslim *Ummah* is to summon people unto Allah, not only the dignity and honour of the *Ummah,* its very

existence and continuity is dependent upon fulfilling this obligation - the Divinely ordained duty.

2. *Da'wah* or calling people unto Allah is the most emphatic and foremost teaching of the Holy Prophet (SAW) on which he himself worked ceaselessly throughout his life. So the premier obligation which we owe to the prophet (SAW) is to follow his *Sunnah* of *Da'wah.*

3. We observe that different religions and denominational groups usually employ a team of workers (which may be called their 'civil service') who work to propagate and popularize their own particular sectarian point of view. This phenomenon is not only useless for any really effective work of *Da'wah* but is often positively harmful for the propose.

4. The essential pre-requisites of *Da'wah* work are strong and staunch belief in Islam and the ensuing good deeds, and not scholarly erudition and knowledge of minor religious matters and details of *Fiqh.* Along with a deep conviction in the providence of Allah and a life of righteous deeds and good conduct, a *Da'wah* worker should be a paragon of humility and courtesy. A true and sincere preacher should have a humble disposition. Again, his *Da'wah* should be strictly for Allah and His *Deen* in order to avoid any chance of himself becoming a revered personality (which ultimately leads to the formation of a sort of personality cult) or letting his followers constitute a new religious sect within the community of Muslims.

5. There are several aspects and stages of *Da'wah* work. The aim of today's discourse is to elucidate only those primary and fundamental stages which are open to, and essential for, every moderately knowledgeable and motivated Muslim.

The Most Sublime Pattern Of Conduct

Now I would like to draw your attention to the events which took place in the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) immediately after his call to prophethood. By doing this, firstly, the real fundamental principle and method of *Da'wah* will be elucidated; and secondly, it will become clear as to what type of hardships and frustrations the Prophet experienced in the early stages of his preaching. Indeed these hardships and difficulties were not different from those which are met with by any pioneering leader of an ideological movement. And he adopted those very natural methods for disseminating his message which any human initiator of a movement is obliged to adopt.

We all know very well that even before prophethood the life of Muhammad (SAW) was a perfect model of moral excellence and his character was a spotless one. He won the epithets of '*As-Sadiq*' (the most truthful) and '*AI-Amin*' (the most trustworthy and honest) from his

community by dint of his probity and fair dealings. It is important to note here that he won these laudatory titles while fully participating in the everyday life and its engagements. He was not at all a hermit who withdraws himself away from the humdrum of life. He always took active part in the affairs of his society, so mush so that he even carried on business and trade at the highest level of his time. And as a matter of fact it was in this very trade and commercial transactions that his real moral qualities of honesty and truthfulness were displayed. Afterwards when he received the revelation from Allah and called people to Islam the penetration and effectiveness of his call depended both on the fact that his teaching was in conformity with the dictates of human nature, familiar to sound discernment and right disposition as well as on the fact that the Prophet (SAW) was himself already known as the most truthful and the most trustworthy.

During the period prior to his being commissioned as the Messenger. of Allah, Muhammad (SAW) took to reflection and meditation and he became more and more dissatisfied with the ephemeral and transitory character of temporal objects and sought more earnestly for the Really Real and the Truth. Accordingly Hadhrat Ayesha (RAA) is reported to have said:

> "Then he (SAW) gradually became a lover of seclusion and he started to retire to cave 'Hira' for meditation and prayer"

The commentaries of *Hadith* literature (sayings of the Holy Prophet) explain the Arabic word "*tahannus*" the activity in which Muhammad (SAW) engaged in the cave "Hira" contemplating and getting revelation. God knows better how long this practice of his persisted. However the time at last came when the seeker of truth[6] did receive the guidance, the word of Allah was brought to him by Gabrael, reality was exposed, and he was summoned to call people to the way of Allah. In the words of Qur'an:

> "0 prophet! Truly we have sent thee as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner, and a summoner unto Allah, by his command, and as a lamp that gives bright light." (33:45-46)

Immediately after he was commissioned as the Divine messenger, Muhammad (SAW) commenced the disseminating and preaching work. Quite naturally, the persons first approached were those who were closest to him, the family members and the people who knew him and his conduct intimately, *viz,* his wife Hadhrat Khadija, his cousin - Hadhrat Ali, his freed servant, Hadhrat Zaid, his close associate, Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddique (RAAA). They all testified Muhammad's claim of Divine apostleship without the slightest hesitation and embraced Islam on the very first day. This fact also shows very vividly the most legitimate starting point from where an Islamic *da'wah* worker should start his campaign that is, *da'wah* should start from one's own household and family members and then gradually extend to closest relatives, companions and friends.

Again, amongst these 'first converts to Islam', Hadhrat Abu Bakr was the most magnificent example of really understanding and earnestly following the Prophet's practice of preaching and calling people to Allah. In compliance with the Prophet's teachings, immediately after embracing Islam, Abu Bakr himself became an ardent advocate and preacher of that faith. And it was on account of his preaching and propagating work that the 'foremost in faith' - Hadhrat Usman, Abdur Rahman Bin Auaf, Talha, Zubair, Saad bin Abi Waqqas, Abu Ubaida bin aI-Jarrah, Usman bin Mazoon and many others (RAAA) - came in the fold of Islam and became members of Muhammad's (SAW) *Ummah.* These historical facts prove beyond any doubt that the premier demand of the claim of love for the Prophet is to follow his *Sunnah* of Islamic preaching and calling people to the way of Allah. It is to be noted here that Abu Bakr (Siddique-i-Akbar) was no hermit or recluse. Rather he was a man of wealth and social influence, and a well-established trader. The Holy Prophet (SAW) is reported to have said on one occasion: 'I have paid for the benefaction of every one except that of Abu Bakr. Only Allah can repay the good which he has done to me. The fact is that the whole of the *Ummah* is greatly indebted to Abu Bakr for the great service rendered to it by winning over to Islam a large number of highly devoted persons at the very early stage of his preaching and thus strengthening the ranks of the nascent Muslim community. Indeed this is true about all other companions of the Prophet (SAW). As a matter of historical fact, whosoever embraced Islam, instantly became himself a preacher and *daaee* (one who calls and invites people to Allah) of that faith.

Let us concentrate here on the most fundamental and earliest Quranic injunction in this context. The Holy Prophet was ordered:

> And warn thy tribe, near kindred (26:214)

Just try to think what a man will do even today if he is commanded to communicate an important message to his relatives and family members. The Prophet (SAW) took recourse to the best and most effective way ever conceivable. He invited all the members of his clan - Banu Hashim – to his place for a meal. Thus after entertaining about forty of them, he very gently started to present the teachings of Islam before them.

He had hardly started his discourse when the profane and nonsense talk of Abu Lahab intervened and the gathering dispersed without hearing Prophet's talk. Just think how much apparently disappointing and nerve – shattering this experience might have been for him. However, there is no question of real disappointment for a person who calls people to Allah. He again arranged a feast and addressed them after the meal. We know from reliable reports that from amongst the whole gathering only one boy Hadhrat Ali vowed to help him (SAW) in his Divine mission. Just visualize the prophet calling his kinsmen and family members to Allah and no one paying heed to him except a lad! In fact Hadhrat AIi (RAA) was already his own kith, as he lived under his patronage. This means that these two feasts were really of no avail. Such were the occasions on which numerous Qur'anic verses were specifically revealed for

consolation and solace:

> And wait patiently for the judgement of thy Lord; for assuredly thou art before our eyes. (52:48)

> And endure thou with patience; and verily thy patience is possible only with the help of Allah. (16:127)

> So now declare openly that which thou art commanded. (15:94)

Accordingly, following the custom of those days, the Prophet stood up on the mountain 'Safa' and addressed the people at the top of his voice thus: "0, people! I warn you of a danger; assemble at once." When the people gathered near him, he delivered his 'Sermon of the Mountain' by saying, "0, the community of Quraish! Will you believe me if I tell you that an enemy troop is rushing from behind the hill?" They all said, "Why not, we have always found you truthful". Thereupon the Prophet said in a moving tone, "If you do not believe in Allah and worship Him alone, grievous punishment would befall upon you". In response however, the people were very much flared up, and it is reported that on this very occasion Abu Lahab had uttered these words:

> May you face perdition, you called and assembled us for this!

At this juncture the *Surah Lahab* was revealed to the Prophet stating that not the hands of Muhammad (SAW) but the hands of Abu Lahab had perished. The perdition of Abu Lahab, though decreed by Allah and as such a 'fact' of *AIam-i-Amar* was yet to appear after a few years in the world of temporal events. At the time of the Prophet's preaching at the mountain Safa, it looked as if he were addressing and putting his message before the deaf and the dumb as not a single one of them responded to his call favourably. If we analyze this 'Sermon of the Mountain', we come to realize that the most important argument presented in this was People's confession of the proclaimer's truthfulness and trustworthiness. Moreover, it also very graphically clarifies the position of a Divine prophet vis a vis the People. Standing on a mountain, a prophet can look on both sides of it; whereas people standing at the foot of the mountain are unaware of the situation at the other side. Ordinary men are short-sighted and their perception is restricted to only the phenomenal world, and even in this realm to the apparent aspects of reality. Their gaze cannot penetrate the inner and hidden core of physical entities. As the Qur'an says:

> They know but the outer (things) in the life of this world: but of the end of thing (or the hereafter) they are headless.(30:7).

A Prophet - a Divine Messenger - on the other hand, not only has a knowledge of the inner reality and true significance of spatio-temporal world, his gaze even goes beyond, to have a look of other-worldly things, the objects and happenings of the Hereafter.

This is how the fold of *Da'wah* expanded gradually. The Prophet (SAW) addressed gatherings of people on innumerable occasions. He also approached them individually and sounded out his call of Islam. He even visited them at their places and left no stone unturned in executing this duty. Whenever he came to know that a caravan or some strangers had arrived in Makkah, he would go to meet them and present his teachings to them. This also explains very clearly and significantly the difference between the *Da'wah* Work on the one hand and his day - to - day teachings on the other. A teacher usually does not take such pains as a missionary worker *i.e.* a *daaee* (one who invites people to Allah) takes. Teacher is a person who is eagerly sought and respected by his students. Students come to him in order to quench their thirst for knowledge and wisdom. On the contrary, a *daaee* is always on the look out for those to whom he can preach his message. He knocks at every door and visits every hearth and hamlet in the hope that he may find a person who would listen to him sympathetically. Most of the people not only turn a deaf ear to him, they also ridicule and manhandle him. Despite all this, he prays to Almighty Allah at night with utmost humility and begs favourable change in the attitude of the people. It is reported that Prophet Muhammad (SAW), used to pray, "0 God I beg Thee that either Umar bin Khattab or Amr bin Hisham may enter the fold of Islam (so that he could help him in his mission)." One should also here bear in mind that a *daaee* has most sensitive heart in his bosom which feels misery, pain and agony over the negative attitude of the people. This was much more so in the case of the Prophet (SAW). He was so much grief-stricken by persistent rejection of his *Da'wah* that he started looking much older than his age. So much so that Allah had to console him as well as warn him lovingly thus:

> It may be that thou tormentest thyself (0 Muhammad) because they believe not. (26:3)
>
> Yet it may be, if they believe not in this statement, that though (Muhammad) will torment thy soul with grief over their foot steps. (18:6)
>
> Ta' Ha, We have not revealed unto thee (Muhammad) this Qur'an that thou shouldest be distressed. (20:1-2)

THE BASIC POINTS OF DA'WAH

After this preliminary stage of *Da'wah*, a long spell of persecution and torture started at Makkah in which the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his companions suffered all sorts of hardships and ordeals. Some even lost their lives as a result of grievous injuries inflicted upon them by the callous and ruthless opponents. This is a long chapter of the missionary life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and calls for detailed and independent treatment. I shall not pause here to do that. As I said at the beginning, I would confine myself in this discourse to the preliminary stages of *Da'wah*. I do want, however, to narrate at this juncture one of the sermons of the Holy Prophet which definitely relates to the early period of his Prophetic mission. This sermon very graphically and clearly tells us the basic and fundamental themes to be developed and emphasized in *Da'wah* work and Islamic preaching in its initial stages. In numerous collections

of the sermons of the Prophet this has been reported thus:

> "0 People you know very well that the guide of a caravan never leads it astray. I swear by God that, even if I could mislead others, I would not have misled you (as you are my own tribesmen). Even if I could misinform others, I would not misinform you. I swear by Allah the only God to be worshipped that I am Allah's messenger to you in particular and to all humanity in general. I swear by God that one day you will all die as you daily go to sleep. Then surely you will be awakened as you wake every morning after sleep. Certainly you will then face the Day of Judgement, you will be rewarded for your good deeds and punished for the evil. The reward is the permanent abode in paradise and the punishment is eternal burning in hell-fire."

In this address the Prophet (SAW) has very wisely compared a Divine messenger to the guide of a caravan *(Raid* in Arabic) who was usually the most trusted person and during a long journey through a desert, he used to decide about the suitable halting points. He knew the best camping sites where water and other necessities were available. It is obvious that the safety and welfare of the entire caravan depended on the truthfulness and sincerity of the guide. A slight neglect or misdemeanor on his part could endanger the whole caravan. Quite similar is the position of a Prophet. He informs the caravan of this world about the ultimate destination that lies in the Hereafter, and warns those who are neglectful or ignorant about their doom and peril on the Day of Judgement. After explaining in a telling manner, his role as a Divine Prophet (SAW), he informed the people of Makkah about the oneness of the Creator and his call to prophethood. Then he warned them most vehemently about the eternal life after death in which they were going to account for each and every action of theirs, however small and insignificant it might be. Whereas good and virtuous deeds would lead a man to the blissful life of paradise, bad deeds would lead to eternal and severest torture of the hell. This itself amply shows that the basic and fundamental points of Islamic *Da'wah* are the following three:

1. Belief in the unity (or oneness) of God.

2. Belief in prophethood or Divine guidance through messengers.

3. Belief in the Day of Judgement and the life Hereafter.

But even amongst these, initially more emphasis should be placed on reckoning of deeds in the Hereafter and warning about the eternal punishment and glad tidings about the eternal blissful abode in paradise. The whole of the Qur'an and, in particular, the *surahs* revealed at Makkah bear witness to this. This first order given to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) regarding *Da'wah* in these words:

> 0 thou enveloped in thy cloak arise and warn (74:1-2)

also proves this conclusively and without a shadow of doubt. The implementation of the Islamic

sharia (legal system) and the enforcement of the total Islamic way of life at the global level is certainly the ultimate goal and objective of Islamic preaching and *Da'wah.* But it is important to bear in mind that this is rather a distant and final objective. The primary and immediate goal, however, is that of the salvation and deliverance of humanity in the life Hereafter. This truth is authenticated by one of the sayings of the Prophet (SAW) in which he described himself as one trying to pull out those who were bent on falling into a deep ditch of burning fire. Again it is quite understandable that the individuals who are loved most are approached first in this regard. That is why the Holy Prophet (SAW) used to assemble his closest family members and addressed them thus:

> '0 Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad (SAW), act in order to be saved from hell on the day of reckoning, as I shall have no authority before Allah Almighty in this respect.'(Tirmizi)

> '0 Safiyya, the aunt of Allah's messenger, I would be of no avail to you in front of Allah, and 0 Fatima the daughter of Muhammad (SAW), you can ask anything from my belongings but I have no authority to benefit you before Allah.'(Bukhari, Muslim)

In the above lines I have made a modest attempt to present before you very precisely and systematically the fundamentals of Islamic *Da'wah* and salient features of its methodology. Fortunate and blessed are those who decide henceforth to work for the propagation of Islam, keeping in view the above mentioned guide lines. In this way they will also truly follow the practice of the Holy Prophet (SAW) with regard to calling people to Allah. I have deliberately confined myself in this discourse to the initial stages of Islamic preaching and *Da'wah* because I am convinced that until and unless centres for *Da'wah* work on this pattern are not established in all cities, towns, and villages of our lands, we cannot struggle to attain the higher and culminating stages of *Da'wah, i.e.,* the establishment of the *Deen* of Allah on the earth in its totality. And only in this way the *Ummah* as a whole can execute its duties and obligations to the rest of humanity. On the contrary, if a group of Muslims engaged in Islamic revivalist work prematurely start making big claims like "the International Islamic revolution" and "the establishment of the Islamic way of life", they are not likely to succeed in their mission. Such attempts must be preceded by *Da 'wah* work at a very large scale both at the grass-root level and at the highest intellectual level, in which salvation of the Hereafter is truly emphasized and not just cursorily mentioned.

Endnotes

1. *Surah Qaf: 37*

2. This is an allusion to verse (*aaya*) No. 3 of *surah –tu – Juma.*

3. This is a connotation to verse (*aaya*) No. 2 of *surah –tu –Juma.*

4. This refers to the verse 7 of surah "Bani Israel". The complete verse reads:

   So when the second of the warnings came to pass, We permitted your enemies to disfigure your faces, and to enter your temple as they had entered it before and to visit with destruction all that fell into their power.

5. The reader must bear in mind that this article was written in 1967 and much has happened since.

6 The Qur'anic verse of *Surah Wad-Duha* "And found you in search of reality, so guided you."